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A very brief description of what an English instructor in the junior college should teach also emphasized the training he needs. (BN)

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READING AND LITERATURE

by Larry McDonald

1968

The junior college English teacher who has pursued the traditional curriculum has taken a program in which the major emphasis has been upon analyzing and interpreting literature, probably with special emphasis upon poetry. Hence, he may be well prepared to teach the reading of literature but notably lacking any background for teaching those reading skills of most immediate concern to the average adult.

Every junior college teacher must teach the reading of his subject; of this the teacher of literature is surely aware. But it is often the specific responsibility of the English teacher to teach the bases of all types of reading and particularly critical reading of material provided by the mass media. The junior college reading teacher must stress, first, versatility of approach and, second, an awareness by the student of the complexity of influences which affect his reading skill and choice of material. The speed reading course, often heavily machine-oriented, is a deception. Likewise, the teacher who implies that the reading techniques suitable for the study of imaginative literature are of universal applicability sadly misguides his students. The composition class where the student writes and talks about expository material dealing with current controversial topics is probably the best place to teach both the study skills urgently needed by a college student and lifetime reading habits. Providing book shelves lined with mostly non-fiction paperbacks available for the taking is the best teaching technique. A course offering the bases for the selection of such books is a sine qua non in a curriculum for the preparation of junior college English teachers. Beyond that, probably even more than a specialized course in the teaching of reading, the instructor of such a class needs a background in sociology and psychology with special emphasis on semantics.

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